United Nations A/CN.10/PV.226

General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

226th Meeting
Monday, 12 April 1999, 10.00 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Abdelaziz . . . . . (Egypt)

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Opening of the session

The Chairman: I declare open the 1999 substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

Allow me, on behalf of all members of the Commission, to extend a most cordial and warm welcome to Mr. Jin Yongjian, Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, whose Department is responsible for servicing the United Nations Disarmament Commission; Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, whose Department will provide substantive support to the Commission at this session; and Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament.

Statement by the Chairman

The Chairman: At the beginning of the 1999 substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, allow me to express my sincere appreciation to members for their confidence, shown by their electing me to the chairmanship of the Commission. Allow me also on their behalf to express the Commission's appreciation and gratitude to the Chairman of the 1998 substantive session, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus, for all the efforts he exerted that led to a successful 1998 substantive session.

The Disarmament Commission holds its substantive session this year in the midst of changing international realities and diverse challenges that require the Commission, as the specialized deliberative disarmament machinery in which all the United Nations membership is represented, to take stock of these new realities and to face these challenges, thus enhancing the role of the United Nations in achieving its lofty goals in all disarmament issues.

What adds to the importance of this particular substantive session of the Commission is that it is being held in the last year of the current millennium. This, from my point of view, should be regarded not only as an occasion for celebration, but also as an incentive for widening the scope of agreement on disarmament policies and actions for the new millennium, including reaching agreement on all issues before the Commission at this session, thus allowing a better start of a new phase of the work of the Commission in the future.

One other reason for us to intensify our efforts aimed at reaching agreement on all three topics on the agenda is that, pursuant to General Assembly decision 52/492 of 8 September 1998, this substantive session of the Disarmament Commission is the last to apply the three-item phased approach, and that, beginning with the next substantive session, the Commission will move into a two-item phased approach, including an item on nuclear disarmament. I believe that the implementation of all the provisions stipulated in that decision will have a positive impact on the work of the Commission, as well as on the efforts of the Disarmament Commission, the First Committee and the Conference on Disarmament in all disarmament fields.

99-85264 (E)

This record contains the original texts of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one week of the date of publication*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

I would like to touch briefly on the work of the three Working Groups. I shall not enter into the current developments under each of the topics, which I look forward to hearing about from Ambassador Dhanapala, the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, but rather I shall give my own brief perspective of the work done in all the Working Groups and the prospects for future work in each of them.

The work in Working Group I on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned has reached an advanced stage. I believe this is a positive development that should allow us to finalize this subject by the end of the substantive session and to adopt the guidelines and, if possible, specific recommendations on the establishment of such zones to meet the increasing support given by the General Assembly to this subject, as reflected in the increasing support for some resolutions, such as those on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in the Middle East and in Central Asia, as well as the increasing support for the resolution on a nuclear weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas.

Turning to the work in Working Group II on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, it is important to note that resolution 53/77 AA on this agenda item was adopted by the General Assembly without a vote for the second year. I hope that this fact, and the fact that the General Assembly entrusted the Commission with continuing its work on this subject for this session, will allow us to reach the desired consensus on the objectives and the agenda of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, as well as on the date for convening that important and long-awaited session of the General Assembly.

On this subject, I would like to urge each and every member to show the maximum flexibility needed to reach this agreement. In doing so, I must emphasize that our work in the Disarmament Commission is not intended to substitute for that of the preparatory committee that I expect will be established to prepare for the session. Therefore, the aim of our work on this subject should be to agree on the broad parametres, concepts and topics that compose the broad lines of the objectives and the agenda and leave the details for the preparatory committee to deal with.

While urging maximum flexibility, I must admit that I am a little bit concerned that, as close as we came to an agreement on this subject last year, there remain one or two issues that require much more political will to solve and I hope that the necessary political will shall materialize to allow us to reach agreement on this important issue this year. A failure to do so on the eve of the new millennium, and in the wake of accelerated negative developments that could undermine all our achievements in all fields of disarmament, will certainly damage the credibility of the United Nations in the field of disarmament.

Moving on to Working Group III on guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N, I believe that there exists a high level of agreement on the importance of such an integrated approach towards certain practical disarmament measures in the conventional field, including small arms and light weapons, confidence-building measures, demobilization and reintegration of combatants, demining and conversion and other related issues, and I am confident that, with members' resolve to finish our work on this subject, we can adopt the necessary guidelines by the end of the session.

Finally, and in order to begin the process of selecting the two subjects to be inscribed on the agenda of the 2000 substantive session, taking duly into consideration the provisions of General Assembly decision 52/492 of 8 September 1998, I would encourage members of the Commission, as well as regional and political groups, to begin a process of consultations on which items could be inscribed on the agenda next session, taking into account the developments and results of our deliberations on the existing three items. I will consult with the Bureau on the most appropriate time to start the consultations on this important issue, as well as on any further proposals on the rationalization of the work of the Commission in the future.

Adoption of the agenda

The Chairman: If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the provisional agenda for this session, as contained in document A/CN.10/L.44.

The agenda was adopted.

Organizational matters

The Chairman: At its organizational session, the Commission considered a series of organizational matters which included, first, the provisional agenda, which we have just adopted; secondly, the composition of the Bureau for the 1999 session; thirdly, the establishment of the three Working Groups on the three substantive agenda items; fourthly, the appointment of the Chairmen of the Working Groups; and, fifthly, the decision on the dates of the 1999 substantive session.

In this regard, at its organizational session the Commission elected the following members of the Bureau: as Vice-Chairmen, Mr. Vice Skračić of Croatia, Mr. Pierre Benedetto Francese of Italy, Mr. Octar Ouane of Mali, Mrs. Angélica Arce de Jeannet of Mexico, Mr. Jargalsaikhany Enkhsaikhan of Mongolia, Mr. Felipe Mabilangan of the Philippines, Mr. Rui Vinhaš of Portugal and Mr. Milos Koterec of Slovakia. The Commission elected Miss Gaile Ann Ramoutar of Trinidad and Tobago as Rapporteur. He also elected Mr. Emilio Izquierdo of Ecuador as Chairman of Working Group I, on agenda item 4, nuclear-weapon-free zones; Mr. Arizal Effendi of Indonesia as Chairman of Working Group II, on agenda item 5, the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament; and Mr. Michael Hoey of Ireland as Chairman of Working Group III, on agenda item 6.

I should like to extend my warmest congratulations to the elected members of the Bureau and the Chairmen of the Working Groups of the Commission for the year 1999.

The Chairman: I would now like to discuss the general programme of work and the allocation of time and resources for the current session. As members may recall, document A/CN.10/1999/CRP.1 was distributed during the resumed meeting of the organizational session on 19 March 1999. Delegations now have before them document A/CN.10/1999/CRP.1/Rev.1, which includes information about the change of conference rooms on 23 April. It should be noted that the programme of work is an indicative timetable for the work of the Commission and as such it is subject to further adjustment, as necessary.

With regard to the working timetable, the Secretariat has prepared and distributed the preliminary timetable for the first week of the work of the Commission. The timetable will remain unchanged, except for one minor alteration which has been agreed by the Bureau: the meeting scheduled for Working Group III, on agenda item 6, on the morning of Wednesday, 14 April, will now take place on Thursday, 15 April, at 3 p.m. The meeting of Working Group I, on agenda item 4, nuclear-weapon-free zones, originally scheduled for the afternoon of Thursday, 15 April, will now take place at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, 14 April. These changes have been made merely for logistical reasons, in order to allow sufficient time for the processing of working papers submitted by the Chairmen, which are supposed to be discussed in those meetings of the Working Groups.

As for the second and the third weeks of our work, two relevant informal papers will be decided upon by the Bureau, in consultation with the Chairmen of the Working Groups. The Secretariat will issue those papers in due course.

As for the allocation of time for each agenda item, the principle of equal footing and flexibility for practical purposes will be observed. As I have noted before, the weekly timetable and programme of work will take into account the needs of each subsidiary body through consultations with the Chairmen of the Working Groups. Although all three items under consideration are in their third and final year, one might expect that not all Working Groups will require the same number of meetings. Should this become evident, the Working Group most in need of time will certainly be given every consideration and cooperation to accommodate its requirements.

Some of the Chairmen of the Working Groups have expressed the wish to use smaller conference rooms at some stage. I will try, in consultation with the Secretariat, to accommodate those requirements as much as possible.

As members may notice, in document A/CN.10/1999/CRP.I/Rev.1, containing the general programme of work, four meetings have been allocated for the general exchange of views. I would like to ask delegations wishing to make statements to inscribe their names on the list of speakers as soon as possible. In this context, I propose, following past practice, to set a deadline for such inscription of 6 p.m. today. May I also remind delegations that, following past practice, 25 copies of statements should be provided to the Secretariat before they are delivered.

If there is no objection, I shall take it that it is the wish of the Commission to proceed in this manner.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: As representatives may have noticed, the general programme of work envisages two meetings of the Committee of the Whole, on 23 and 30 April. In those meetings we will discuss, among other things, proposals for a medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 with regard to the disarmament programme. The medium-term plan is the principal policy directive of the United Nations and guides the allocation of resources in subsequent programme budgets. In its resolutions 51/219 and 53/207, the General Assembly emphasized the importance of the consultative process with Member States. As I am sure members are aware, in the past the programmes and revisions thereof were not always reviewed by the relevant intergovernmental bodies. This year, at the suggestion of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, we intend to circulate a United Nations Disarmament Commission document containing the Secretary-General's proposals on the mid-term programme and to devote, if necessary, up to two meetings of the Committee of the Whole to discussions on this issue.

In order to utilize efficiently the available conference resources, I would also like to appeal to all members of the Disarmament Commission to be punctual in attending all scheduled meetings of the Commission and to maximize the utilization of the services allocated to us by avoiding early adjournment of the meetings whenever possible.

Regarding documentation for the current session, I wish to point out that last year's report of the Disarmament Commission to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, document A/53/42, as well as documents listed in the report, will serve as important background documents for this session. Previous reports of the Commission, of course, will also be useful for reference for all three Working Groups, especially with regard to consideration of the item on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. In the course of deliberations on various agenda items, particularly items 4 and 6, the Commission might expect a number of new documents to be submitted by the Chairmen of the Working Groups and by delegations. I would urge delegations to submit their working papers to the Secretariat as soon as possible to allow sufficient time for processing.

As members know, the Chairman of Working Group I, on agenda item 4, has circulated a new working paper, contained in document A/CN.10/1999/WG.I/WP.1. In that connection, I call on the Chairman of Working Group I.

Mr. Izquierdo (Ecuador), Chairman of Working Group I (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish first of all, Sir, to welcome you personally and to express the satisfaction of my delegation at seeing you guiding the work of the Disarmament Commission at this session. You may be assured of our fullest support in the discharge of your functions.

I wish to correct a small error in the English text of document A/CN.10/1999/WG.I/WP.1. In conformity with the Spanish original, section B should be entitled "Objectives and guidelines".

The Chairman: As was the case in previous years, non-governmental organizations are welcome to attend plenary meetings and meetings of the Committee of the Whole of the Disarmament Commission, as observers.

General exchange of views

The Chairman: I call on the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala.

Mr. Dhanapala (Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs): I begin, Mr. Chairman, by congratulating you and your Bureau and by pledging the total cooperation and support of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, the substantive department servicing this body, in your stewardship of the affairs of Disarmament Commission. You bring to your task experience and expertise in disarmament affairs, giving us all hope of a successful outcome this year. I appreciate being provided this opportunity address the Commission at its first substantive meeting.

Global norms, especially disarmament norms, are not created overnight. They emerge from a painstaking process of deliberation, consensus-building and negotiation. As the General Assembly's subsidiary organ mandated to consider and make recommendations on disarmament issues, the Disarmament Commission plays an important role in this evolutionary process of building global disarmament norms. It identifies general principles and suggests concrete measures needed to achieve them. Its record, therefore, must be judged within this larger context of norm-building, for this is the Commission's *métier*, its special contribution to the Charter's goals of international peace and security.

The activities of the Commission are most significant not for what they reveal about the persisting

disagreements among member States, but for the light they shed on the basic objectives that unite all such States. The differences that arise only underscore the need for a deliberative forum such as the Disarmament Commission to continue this difficult but edifying process of forging global disarmament norms. There is, I believe, a symbiotic relationship among the various bodies that compose the present United Nations architecture for the deliberation and negotiation of disarmament. Each body plays its part in the grand design laid down in the Final Declaration of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

The Disarmament Commission has been able to adapt its working methods to meet changing circumstances and needs: at the beginning of the decade and, most recently, last year. In June 1998 the Commission decided to streamline its agenda further so that it would normally include two substantive items per year, including one on nuclear disarmament. The Commission retained the possibility of adding a third item if there were consensus — as is, in fact, the case at the present session. Over the years, the Commission has elaborated guidelines that have marked out common ground on many sensitive issues, including international arms transfers and regional disarmament. These texts have contributed to the subsequent consideration of related subjects by the Disarmament Commission itself and by other bodies. They have contributed, in short, to norm-building.

The General Assembly has asked the Commission to continue deliberating and to reach conclusions on some of the most stubborn problems on the international security agenda today. Some of these are problems that have vexed our diplomatic predecessors and that have driven a few observers to become cynical about the prospects for achieving global disarmament norms and about the role of the United Nations in fostering and maintaining such norms. It is therefore to the credit of the institution of the Disarmament Commission that the General Assembly has charged it with the important tasks that it will perform in the weeks ahead. These relate specifically to three key issues on which the General Assembly would like to have responses.

The first issue before the Disarmament Commission concerns the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, which the General Assembly has been discussing since 1956. The right to establish such zones is explicitly recognized in article VII of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Last December, the General Assembly adopted several resolutions endorsing the establishment of additional nuclear-weapon-free zones, including a resolution welcoming the declaration by Mongolia of its nuclear-weapon-free status. The working paper of the Chairman of Working Group I notes that such zones represent more than half the Earth's land mass, a tribute to the tenacity of a durable global norm, the norm of nuclear disarmament.

The working paper also notes that such zones help strengthen the security of their Member States and should be based on arrangements freely arrived at among such States, taking into account all the relevant characteristics of the region concerned.

The United Nations can assist States in establishing such zones. The Department for Disarmament Affairs is doing so now in the case of the Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone. A treaty text is now under discussion by States in the region.

Nuclear-weapon-free-zones are freely pursued by non-nuclear-weapon States as a deliberate form of affirmative action to protect themselves from the dangers of nuclear weapons. From the Treaty of Tlatelolco in 1967 to the Treaty of Bangkok in 1995, four inhabited regions of the world, covering 114 countries, are now free of nuclear weapons. These nuclear-weapon-free zones have varying prohibitions and arrangements for their defence against the danger of nuclear weapons. They have steadily shrunk the global area where nuclear weapons may be manufactured, stored or deployed.

Further deliberation is needed on specific purposes, principles and guidelines for establishing such zones. The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in other regions, such as the Middle East, South Asia and Central Europe, remains a daunting challenge for international diplomacy. On the other hand, the alarming nightmares that would accompany a world of many "nuclear-weapons-full" zones should be enough of an inducement for further progress by all countries in pursuit of the global nuclear disarmament norm.

Turning now to the next item on the agenda, I note that this is the Commission's fourth year of deliberations over the proposal for a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). Though agreement on the objectives and agenda for SSOD IV has so far proved elusive, the persistence and depth of the world community's support for convening such a session is clear.

Introduced by South Africa, on behalf of the members of the Non-Aligned Movement, and adopted last December without a vote, resolution 53/77 AA recorded the General Assembly's decision to convene such a special session, subject to the emergence of a consensus on its objectives and agenda. This resolution underscored the high priority that the General Assembly attaches to disarmament as a fundamental and continuing concern of the United Nations. Disarmament continues to be perceived as a global public good with profound implications affecting the activities of virtually the entire United Nations system.

It has been 21 years since the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD I) produced its Final Document, which remains the high water mark of multilateral consensus on disarmament issues. It has also been 11 years since the last special session on disarmament (SSOD III). At the cusp of the twenty-first century and a new millennium, there is an urgent need for a commonly agreed set of goals and strategies to achieve them. Epochal changes have been taking place in international relations. Fresh challenges have emerged. New forces are in action. They all have to be woven into a new multilateral disarmament order. Failure to do so has so far led to widespread concern. Over the last decade, we have witnessed numerous conferences on many of the global challenges, conferences whose results have contributed to the evolution of a web of new rights and duties. Disarmament must find its place in this ongoing process.

The grounds for the General Assembly's decision to convene SSOD IV are well founded. A short list of significant challenges that lie ahead would have to include weapons of mass destruction, the excessive build-up and trade in conventional arms, regional proliferation threats, missile tests, implications from the deployment of national missile-defence systems, the never-ending qualitative improvements in weapons systems and illicit trafficking in small arms manufactured to military specifications. All of these developments profoundly affect prospects for peace and sustainable development, improvements in human security and even a healthy environment. It is precisely these sweeping effects of unfettered armament that add urgency to the call for a new special session on disarmament.

The critical decisions on disarmament ultimately remain a matter for the Member States to decide, in this Commission and in other forums. When the proposal to convene an SSOD IV is considered, it may be necessary at this early stage to be modest and to confine the discussion to the terms of resolution A/53/77 AA. To attempt to negotiate end results when, under paragraph 2 of that resolution, the Commission is required by the General Assembly to "promote agreement on the agenda and timing of the special session" would put the cart before the horse.

The Commission will also consider proposed guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures. The effort to craft such guidelines and mobilize support for them deserves special recognition, in particular the work by the group of interested States, chaired by Germany.

The world community has clearly decided that it will no longer turn a blind eye to the costs that small arms and light weapons are imposing on human security and sustainable development. The Secretary-General stated in his last report on the work of the Organization that 90 per cent of those killed or wounded in conflicts involving light military weapons are civilians and that 80 per cent of those are women and children. In his report on the causes of conflict in Africa, he concluded that improvements in transparency, particularly with respect to the activities of international arms merchants, would do more to combat the flow of illicit arms into Africa than any other single initiative.

The concept of "practical disarmament measures" is a relatively new political initiative to deal with these wide-ranging challenges from conventional arms. It first appeared on the agenda of the General Assembly in 1996 and has enjoyed a consensus ever since. Resolution 53/77 M, introduced by Germany and adopted last December by the General Assembly without a vote, encouraged the Disarmament Commission to continue its efforts aimed at the adoption of such guidelines in 1999.

The underlying approach gives the Secretary-General a broad mandate to respond directly to specific requests for assistance in the field of disarmament made by Member States. This assistance is often required to address numerous problems arising out of post-conflict situations, including demobilization, integration of former combatants into civil society, weapons collection and destruction programmes, the exchange of information and other such activities.

Small arms, while not in themselves the causes of wars or civil conflict, are nonetheless raising a number

of difficult problems for international peace and security. These problems are aggravated by the lack of reliable data on the production and sale of such arms, coupled with the growing lethality of such weapons and their easy availability on both the open and black markets.

Last December, the General Assembly also adopted without a vote a resolution on illicit traffic in small arms. That resolution requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report on this issue addressing the problem and possible solutions and identifying roles for the United Nations. Together these resolutions constitute strong evidence of the world community's concern over these problems. They also demonstrate high confidence in the United Nations expertise and the role of the Secretary-General in developing new initiatives to address such problems.

Last year, the Department for Disarmament Affairs, with the support of the group of interested States, organized a training programme in Cameroon on practical disarmament measures, and a workshop in Guatemala that focused on problems of integrating combatants into civil society. The Department and the United Nations Development Programme are also jointly assisting the Government of Albania in the collection of weapons from the civilian population, in return for development incentives.

Though each project was a unique response to unique circumstances, all practical disarmament measures work from the premise that the problems of weapons collection and the integration of combatants into civil society cannot adequately be addressed in isolation from their underlying political conflicts and socio-economic conditions. The revitalization of the Department for Disarmament Affairs Regional Centres for peace and disarmament in Lima and Lomé respond to the need to approach these issues from a regional and local perspective.

The Department for Disarmament Affairs, through its chairmanship of Coordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA), is also working to ensure the consistency of the diverse United Nations efforts to address the global threats posed by the excessive accumulation and misuse of small arms. Members of CASA agree on the need to enhance public awareness and to support measures within civil society to prevent armed conflicts and violence involving such weapons.

It is encouraging that the General Assembly adopted resolution 53/77 E, calling for an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects, which the Government of Switzerland has offered to host not later than the year 2001.

Advocacy of these practical disarmament measures need not interfere with or compromise the inherent right of self-defence, nor need such measures divert attention from nuclear disarmament. To the contrary, such measures promote both world peace and development and constitute an issue with auspicious prospects for North-South cooperation. It is highly appropriate, therefore, that the Disarmament Commission will now seek to develop a consensus around further initiatives that may be taken in the growing field of the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures.

As the commission may be aware, the United Nations Secretariat is in the process of preparing the medium-term plan for the period 2002 to 2005. The medium-term plan is the principal policy directive of the United Nations. It reflects Member States' priorities and describes the overall orientation of the Organization's programmes. The plan indicates the broad approach or strategy of each programme in pursuit of the mandates set by the Charter and by the General Assembly, including its special sessions.

The General Assembly has requested that the medium-term plan proposals be reviewed by the relevant intergovernmental bodies prior to submission to the United Nations programme and budgetary bodies. Accordingly, the Department for Disarmament Affairs has asked that the proposed programme for disarmament be placed on the agenda of the United Nations Disarmament Commission under "Other business". In accordance with budgetary procedures, the Department will submit the proposed plan to the Committee for Programme and Coordination in June 2000, and thereafter to the relevant Main Committees of the General Assembly. The Department is pleased to submit this plan for review by the Commission this year.

I would also like to take this opportunity today to inform all delegations that the Department for Disarmament Affairs is organizing a symposium on missile development and the impact on global security, which will be held on 22 April in conference room 4. This will be an informal overview and discussion by some visiting international experts on a wide range of problems relating to missile proliferation, missile defence, export controls and development. It is one of a series of such symposia organized by the Department, and we will be circulating additional details shortly.

Achievements with respect to disarmament have, I believe, lagged far behind the progress that has come with the advent of sustainable development. Like development, disarmament is also a process, one that must be sustained over many years, pursued in many venues and open to contributions from all countries and groups throughout civil society. The deliberations of the Disarmament Commission contribute to this ongoing process of achieving sustainable disarmament, the natural complement to the process of sustainable development. Disarmament without development would be about as ephemeral as prosperity in a world armed to the teeth with weapons that can destroy the very basis of life on Earth. Let us heed, therefore, what history and logic tellus about the prerequisites for a more peaceful and prosperous world.

There is, to be sure, much in the world that might lead one to despair over the future of disarmament. One need only note the continuing deadlock on strategic nuclear disarmament, the events in South Asia in May 1998, reported increases in defence budgets and new outbreaks of armed conflicts and new civilian casualties well after the end of the cold war. Even within the United Nations system, we must note the travails of the Conference on Disarmament in reaching agreement on a programme of work, disputes within the NPT Preparatory Committee meetings and chronic financial constraints on all United Nations activities, to name just a few challenges.

And yet, the future of disarmament may not be so dim after all, since it appeals directly both to the self-interests and ideals of all the peoples of the United Nations. It has weathered worse storms. Efforts from civil society on behalf of disarmament will continue unabated despite these obstacles. So must the work of the Disarmament Commission. The stakes are too big for any other alternative.

Mr. Seibert (Germany): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union (EU). The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated country Cyprus, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area — Iceland and Norway — align themselves with this statement.

I am happy to express to you, Sir, our warmest congratulations on your election as Chairman of the 1999 session of the Disarmament Commission. We are confident that under your chairmanship we will be able to finalize agreement on the three items of our agenda, and we would like to assure you of the full support and cooperation of our delegations in attaining this objective. Our congratulations and our appreciation go also to your predecessor, Mr. Serge Martynov, as well as to the chairmen of the Working Groups, under whose skilful guidance the basis for a successful outcome of this year's work was created.

This year is an important one for the Disarmament Commission. Two of the items on our agenda are in their third year, and our consideration of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament has even entered its fourth year. If we are to bring all three items to a successful conclusion this year, we will have to get down to hard work as early as possible and conduct our business in a spirit of compromise and cooperation. The future role of the Disarmament Commission will depend on the success of our endeavours during this session. The time and effort invested by so many delegations and highly competent disarmament experts and the considerable conference services put at our disposal by the United Nations will be justified only if we are able to arrive at substantive results — at recommendations or guidelines that can be put to good use by Member States, by the United Nations system or by the relevant disarmament negotiating forums.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones continue to be an important building-block of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, complementary to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Following the examples set by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga and Pelindaba, good progress has been achieved in recent years. On the Treaty of Bangkok, a constructive dialogue with the nuclear-weapon States has been established which should be brought to an early and successful conclusion. The European Union welcomes the efforts being deployed to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia, which are moving forward with the unanimous support of the global community.

The European Union believes that the Disarmament Commission can make a useful contribution to the further development of nuclear-weapon-free zones by formulating general principles and recommendations. Although the basic and universally agreed principle that nuclear-weapon-free zones should be based on arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned implies that regional diversity might require different and sometimes innovative solutions, the

experience gathered so far makes it possible to formulate a number of general guidelines that will prove valuable for success in future efforts.

As the European Union emphasized in its contributions to the Working Group last year, the initiative for the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone should, *inter alia*, come from States within the region concerned and be supported by all States in the region. Obligations of States parties should be clearly defined, legally binding and effectively verifiable.

A range of important elements has already been elaborated in the fruitful and substantive debate we had last year, as reflected in the valuable working paper presented by the Chairman of the Working Group at the end of the session. The work done so far should provide us with a solid basis for the successful conclusion of the item this year.

The conflicts of our times are fought with conventional arms, which bring death and destruction to many people. In recent years many important voices, including that of the United Nations Secretary-General, have highlighted the urgent need to address the question of conventional disarmament, which today has become widely accepted. In this respect the European Union continues to believe that conventional items require careful consideration by the Disarmament Commission and that the Commission's agenda should reflect such a concern.

The European Union seizes this opportunity to welcome the important and encouraging progress in the drive to ban anti-personnel landmines. The successful Ottawa process, which has culminated in the entry into force on 1 March 1999 of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, will move another step forward with the imminent meeting of States parties in Maputo.

Inspired by the same determination to achieve progress in addressing the question of small arms and light weapons, the European Union welcomes the growing support for this objective at both the regional and international levels. The European Union welcomes regional efforts such as the adoption by the member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) of a moratorium on the import, export and manufacture of light weapons and the undertakings in the framework of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to counter the illicit trafficking in small arms.

The European Union also welcomes the entry into force of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials. The European Union has contributed significantly to international efforts in this area. It has taken practical measures to implement its Programme for Preventing and Illicit Trafficking in Conventional Arms, in particular through cooperation with, and assistance to, concerned countries focusing on practical disarmament measures. It has adopted a Code of Conduct which has set high common standards for arms exports from all EU member States. Finally, in December 1998 it adopted a legally binding joint action on the contribution by the European Union to combating the destabilizing accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons.

In this context, the European Union fully supports the decision taken by the General Assembly in 1998 in its resolution 53/77 E to convene an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects no later than 2001. The European Union will convey to the Secretary-General its views on the agenda, timing and scope of the conference. It is essential that the conference deal with all relevant causes and implications of the small-arms problem and, to that end, take due account of the valuable contribution of the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts and its reports.

In most conflict and post-conflict environments, the questions of control of small arms and light weapons, demining, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants are increasingly considered to be crucial to effective conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation. To address these situations, different and often overlapping aspects have to be linked: practical disarmament measures, post-conflict confidence- and peace-building, and security and development. These are indispensable and mutually reinforcing elements, and therefore a comprehensive and integrated approach is required to consolidate peace. The validity of this concept has been widely acknowledged in many international forums, including the Brussels Conference of October 1998 with its call for action, and the group of interested States which was formed in New York in March 1998 in an effort to strengthen international cooperation in the field of peace consolidation and to assist affected countries in their practical disarmament efforts through joint sponsorship of specific projects.

The European Union welcomes the fact that the 1998 General Assembly resolution 53/77 M on the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures was again adopted by consensus. It is this particular item which is directly related to the Disarmament Commission's current endeavours in the conventional field. The European Union will actively contribute to the efforts of the Disarmament Commission to adopt a set of practical guidelines during its third year of deliberations on this subject. The EU feels that last year's substantive and useful debate set the parameters for a productive discussion and concrete textual work this year leading to the adoption of guidelines on this important issue.

The European Union believes that a set of practical guidelines would be a valuable contribution of the Disarmament Commission to solving an urgent international security problem. These guidelines should focus on practical disarmament measures while acknowledging that their implementation requires a more coherent framework through an integrated and comprehensive approach towards consolidation of peace, addressing not only immediate, but also medium-term concerns of stable security, which is closely linked to sustainable development. This would not duplicate work under way in other forums and would offer a distinct and concrete issue, well suited to the time available and to the working methods of the Disarmament Commission.

At the beginning of a new millennium, there is a need for a fresh and unbiased look at disarmament and non-proliferation in the light of a fundamentally changed international security environment. The international community must seek agreement on a revised, up-to-date and realistic disarmament agenda for the future that strikes an appropriate balance between different but equally urgent issues, such as weapons of mass destruction and conventional arms. To this end, the EU has supported the proposal to convene a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. However, the fact that no special session has achieved consensus since the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in 1978 is ample warning that a fourth special session will have to be very carefully prepared if it is to achieve these objectives. In particular, a basic agreement on how to go about an fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, and on what we want to get out of it, is a necessary prerequisite for success.

The need to reach a consensus on the objectives and agenda of the fourth special session was clearly recognized in the two most recent General Assembly resolutions on this subject, adopted by consensus. This is the task before us. The EU has, in the past three years, constructively contributed to the efforts to reach such a consensus. We have submitted a number of concrete proposals and papers in an effort to find compromises between opposing views and to support the Chairman of the Working Group in his efforts to pave the way for consensus. Considering the progress achieved so far last year, consensus is within our reach and the EU intends to actively work towards a successful conclusion of our work this year.

We have a very charged agenda this year. We must attempt to reach agreement on all three items. This will not be an easy task. We will have to work hard and make the best use of available time and resources. We should therefore build on the work already done. In particular, concerning the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, we should concentrate on overcoming the fundamental problem that stood in the way of consensus last year. If we succeed in this, we should be able to reach agreement on the basis of the Chairman's paper. The European Union wishes to continue this work in a constructive and efficient way and bring it to a successful conclusion.

The European Union welcomes the decision taken last year on the organization of our work in the Disarmament Commission, even though this decision does not meet all the objectives pursued by the EU and will become fully operative only next year. However, the nomination of the Chairmen of the Working Groups at an early stage has already proved to be a very worthwhile practice and has enabled them to conduct useful consultations with delegations, which can only enhance the quality of our deliberations. The EU believes that the reform and rationalization of the United Nations system and of the disarmament machinery should be an ongoing process. We should therefore continue our discussions on how to make the best use of valuable resources. What is most important, however, is to organize our work in such way that it leads to results. As the Disarmament Commission is a deliberative and not a negotiating body, such results take the form of recommendations or guidelines which are not binding on member States, but offer possible solutions to be applied when and where appropriate and useful. If we keep this in mind, we will be able to produce such results and to demonstrate the continued relevance of the Disarmament Commission to disarmament and to the international community. In this sense, this year's session, with its three topics due to be finalized, will be a crucial session. The European Union will spare no effort to bring it to a successful conclusion.

The Chairman: I would like to extend to Ambassador Kumalo of South Africa a very warm welcome as he assumes his duties as the new Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations. I would emphasize that he is an old hand at the United Nations and in international affairs and that he will make a contribution to the work of the United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): Thank you very much, Sir, for your kind words. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election to the chairmanship of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at this session. Please be assured of the full support and cooperation of my delegation as you work to ensure the success of our deliberations. I also wish to congratulate the Chairpersons of the three Working Groups, as well as members of the Bureau, on their election.

Also, I would like to take a moment to welcome the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. We are pleased with his statement and we will study it and find ways in which we can use it to contribute to the agenda and the affairs of this Committee.

The Disarmament Commission has come to an important crossroad since its creation 20 years ago at the first special session of the General Assembly on disarmament, at which it was tasked to deliberate and make recommendations on various problems in the field of disarmament. The Commission will this year consider for the final time the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, the establishment of guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, and the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly on disarmament. Although much progress has been made during the past two years towards reaching consensus on all three agenda items, the successful conclusion by the Commission of the mandate given to it by the General Assembly will require the strong political will of all Member States. To this end, my delegation will support your efforts, Mr. Chairman, and those of the Chairmen of the three Working Groups, towards the successful conclusion of the Commission's work on all three agenda items.

In the period since the Commission last met, the uncontrolled proliferation of small arms and light weapons has continued to exacerbate conflict around the globe. The continued cycle of violence and armed conflict in many parts of the world has made our work on the development of guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament all the more necessary and important. While the threat to human security posed by weapons of mass destruction remains of critical concern, the unrestrained build-up of conventional weapons beyond a level which can be considered legitimate for the purposes of self-defence continues to pose a threat to the physical safety of people in many countries around the world. The devastating effects that the excessive proliferation and misuse of conventional weapons have on the social, economic and political progress of nations, especially in conflict-affected areas such as Africa, are well known.

South Africa's concern about the proliferation of and illicit trafficking in conventional arms is reflected in the procedure and structure for arms transfers which my Government has established. This structure ensures that the authority over arms trade and transfer policies is vested in the collective ministerial leadership of the National Conventional Arms Control Committee, which is accountable to the Cabinet. It was that body which recently took a landmark decision, in support of the recommendations made by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his report on small arms, that all small arms in the possession of the South African Government which were deemed to be surplus to national requirements would be destroyed rather than sold on open tender, as had been the practice in the past. In implementing this decision, the South African Department of Defence recently announced that it will destroy all surplus, redundant, obsolete and confiscated weapons of a calibre less than 12.7 millimetres by the end of 1999. It is estimated that this process will effectively demilitarize and make scrap of more than 260,000 weapons.

It is South Africa's hope — a hope also expressed by the Secretary-General — that in taking this step we have set an example to be followed by others. The decision to destroy those surplus weapons is in conformity with South Africa's stated policy on small arms and light weapons. This policy, circulated in document A/53/169/Add.3, is based on a number of political, technical, social, humanitarian and economic factors and is aimed at ensuring that due restraint is exercised in the transfer of arms and related technologies. At the 1998 session of the Disarmament Commission, my delegation also circulated details on South Africa's trade in conventional arms.

During previous sessions of the Commission, my delegation made clear the principled position of my Government that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-

free zones in all regions would greatly enhance international peace and security in all regions. South Africa is firmly of the view that the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones is a clear demonstration of the continued commitment of non-nuclear-weapon States to the goal of ridding the world of nuclear weapons. Nuclear-weapon States should in turn undertake unconditional obligations towards nuclear-weapon-free zones, including strictly respecting the status of such zones, and should enter into legally binding commitments, by signing relevant protocols to the treaties establishing such zones, not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against any nuclear-weapon-free zone party.

The Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba are a testament to the determination of the peoples of Latin America, Australasia, South-East Asia and Africa to live in a nuclear-weapon-free world. Nuclear-weapon-free zones serve to strengthen the international non-proliferation regime and encourage the establishment of additional nuclear-weapon-free zones in other parts of the world. Of course, we in Africa are particularly proud of the establishment of the African nuclear-weapon-free zone under the Treaty of Pelindaba. We would use this opportunity to again call on the only remaining State which has territory within the zone and which has not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty Protocol which applies to it as soon as possible. We further call on all of the signatories to the Treaty and its Protocols to ratify these instruments as soon as possible.

South Africa also welcomes the initiatives to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones in those parts of the world where they do not yet exist, particularly the efforts being made by the States of Central Asia. In this regard, we also recall General Assembly resolution 53/77 A, which calls upon all States to support the initiative aimed at the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in that region. The nuclear-test explosions carried out in South Asia during 1998 have made the achievement of a nuclear-weapon free zone there more of a challenge. However, based on our own experience, we would encourage the countries of that region to consider the real national security benefits derived from drawing back from the nuclear abyss and establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone, as opposed to what we found to be the illusion of security provided by retaining the nuclear-weapon option.

In addition, we would recall the call by the heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1998 for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East in accordance with Security Council resolutions 487 (1981) and 687 (1991) and the relevant General Assembly resolutions adopted by consensus. South Africa continues to believe that a key element of the Middle East peace process is a comprehensive approach to issues relating to weapons of mass destruction, and nuclear weapons in particular.

Following the decision by the General Assembly, the Commission will give an unprecedented fourth year of consideration to the issue of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD (IV). However, only through the strong political will of Member States will we be able to convene an SSOD IV so as to effectively review, from a perspective consistent with the current international situation, the most critical aspects of the process of disarmament and to mobilize the international community and public opinion in favour of the elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and of the control and reduction of conventional weapons.

The international disarmament agenda as defined in the Final Document of the first special session devoted to disarmament, which, as we are all aware, remains the only consensus document on these issues, is now over 20 years old. The world has moved on from the dimension which existed in 1978. The much-vaunted peace dividend, which was to have been the product of the end of the cold war, has proven to be a rather fallow field in which peace and security have failed to take root. In fact, the world today faces renewed and more numerous threats to international peace and security. The renewal and updating of the international community's agenda on disarmament issues must therefore be a priority. The concerns and requirements of all members of the international community must be taken into account, and my delegation is hopeful that agreement on a fourth special session will achieve these objectives.

In our consideration of the issues related to a fourth special session, it will be useful to recall the meeting of heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement which took place in Durban, South Africa, last year. At the meeting, the Non-Aligned Movement heads of State or Government reiterated the Movement's call for the holding of a fourth special session devoted to disarmament to review and assess the implementation of the Final Document of the first special session on disarmament. In addition, my delegation would wish to recall the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 53/77 AA, by which it decided, subject to the emergence of a consensus on its objectives and agenda, to convene

the fourth special session devoted to disarmament. In addition, the resolution endorsed the recommendation of the Commission at its 1998 substantive session that it should undertake consultations on a fourth special session for a fourth year.

As was the case last year, South Africa will continue to play a constructive role in the firm conviction that consensus on the objectives of the special session is essential to the convening of such a session. This will allow the international community to renew its efforts in the field of disarmament. I wish to assure the Chairman of the Commission's Working Group II of my delegation's full support and cooperation in his continued efforts to reach an agreement during this session on the convening of a fourth special session on disarmament.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): It gives me great pleasure to see you, Sir, the representative of our sister country, Egypt, presiding over the work of the Disarmament Commission; we have long known your sterling professional and personal qualities, and I take this opportunity to convey to you my warm congratulations and my sincere wishes for success in your difficult task. I take this opportunity also to congratulate all the other members of the Bureau and to assure them of my delegation's wholehearted support. Moreover, we thank the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belarus for his fine work as Chairman of the Commission at its last session. I welcome Mr. Dhanapala, and reiterate Algeria's firm support for his remarkable efforts at the head of the Department for Disarmament Affairs.

The overall political climate that today marks international relations, recent developments in South Asia, and the lack of results at the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) are sources of grave concern for many countries and have forcefully drawn our attention to the need to pursue — obviously, with greater determination and tenacity — the work of disarmament and of strengthening international peace and security.

It is therefore with cautious optimism that my delegation approaches this session of the Disarmament Commission, which is beginning the final phase of its consideration of the three substantive items on its agenda. But at the same time, we come with an open mind and a sincere wish for the general and complete disarmament to which we have always aspired, as we make our own contribution to the work of the Commission, which in recent years has assumed growing importance. In fact, it is still the only body in which member States have the opportunity to deliberate and think about guidelines on crucial disarmament and security problems. We should therefore take advantage of the great potential of this body, as demonstrated at the 1996 session by the production of an agreement on the controversial matter of international arms transfers.

Algeria considers the three substantive items on our agenda as being of great importance, especially because this year the Commission will end its consideration of these items and will, we hope, adopt useful and concrete recommendations on them. In that connection, my delegation is pleased that Indonesia has agreed, at the request of many delegations, including my own, to continue to serve as Chairman of Working Group II, on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Like other non-aligned countries, Algeria believes that this should provide an opportunity to ponder the most critical aspects of the disarmament process and to mobilize the international community for the elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, and for the control and reduction of conventional weapons.

In this regard, my delegation considers that the starting point of the Working Group's deliberations should be the document submitted last year by the Chairman, on which agreement seemed to be quite near at hand. The document is balanced and contains a number of elements that could bring the positions of delegations closer to consensus, particularly on the goals and the agenda of the special session. In our view, the objective of the Working Group should be — as recommended in paragraph 3 of resolution 53/77 AA, adopted without a vote at the fifty-third session of the General Assembly — to "set an exact date for and to decide on organizational matters relating to the convening of the special session". Here, my delegation should have no major difficulties in agreeing with any proposal on the date — provided that it is not too soon, for we would want to avoid any undue haste, which could only be inimical to the success of the session.

Working Group I, for its part, will be considering an equally sensitive item: "The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned". Algeria has always acted in the context of promoting nuclear-weapon-free zones throughout the world, particularly in Africa and in the Middle East; it has

demonstrated its strong commitment to the establishment of such zones by becoming the third State party to the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty — the Pelindaba Treaty — by ratifying it on 11 February 1998.

Algeria sincerely hopes that the impetus that led to the adoption of the Treaty of Pelindaba in April 1996 will be encouraged and sustained by constant efforts to establish similar zones, particularly in the Middle East, which is a source of legitimate concern to all the Arab countries because of the nuclear capability of Israel, which remains the only State in the region to be outside the NPT and which refuses to submit its facilities to International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards. This appeal is particularly timely because today there exists a consensus to the effect that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, which now link 104 countries via the commitments made within the framework of these zones, is a way to strengthen international peace and security.

Indeed, we can only take pleasure in the fact that a number of documents have been submitted by delegations since 1997, the first year of this item's consideration, and that, following the proposal of the chairmanship of Working Group I, held at that time by my country, these papers have been annexed to the final document. These documents are extremely useful and should, in our view, help us consider and prepare final recommendations. From this standpoint, the draft document, dated 19 March, put forward by the Chairman of the Working Group seems worthy of consideration inasmuch as it seems to be based on more recent deliberations on this question, to which, in due course, my delegation will once again make its modest contribution.

Consideration of the third item, entitled "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N," should also conclude this year. At this stage it is important to recall the position of Algeria. We believe conventional weapons must receive as much attention from the international community as other kinds of weapons, particularly when, because of illicit trafficking, these weapons fall outside the control of State systems and are used to supply terrorist and criminal networks whose goal is to destabilize States and damage both their security and that of their peoples. It has now been established that these networks constitute a contemporary global threat against which the international community must mobilize and act in concerted and determined fashion so as to eradicate the threat.

This said, and in spite of the difficulties connected with this third question on our agenda — difficulties which, by the way, my delegation noted when the consideration of this question was proposed — it is clear that the principles and recommendations that we should adopt in this context should be confined to the strengthening of peace in post-conflict situations, should be based on agreements freely negotiated and not imposed by a third party and, finally, should enjoy the consent of the State or States concerned, because it is a fact that without the support of affected countries, these principles may remain dead letters. Nonetheless, my delegation is prepared to continue making its contribution to the Chair so that, here as well, progress can be made in our deliberations and a text acceptable to all can be produced.

The Disarmament Commission has come to occupy an important place in the architecture of disarmament. Its good reputation would be even better secured if we could conclude our work by adopting the recommendations on the three questions. Since it was last reformed in 1991, this body has promoted and developed ideas and proposals. In many cases, progress achieved here has even had a salutary effect on bilateral efforts, as well as the efforts of the Conference on Disarmament.

Given the sensitivity of the questions that have been discussed in the Commission, as well as the positions of the various parties, if we take 1978 — the date of the creation of the Disarmament Commission in its present form — as our starting point, we can rightfully say that overall the results achieved by the Commission are on the positive. More than 12 documents have been adopted, which is an average of one item concluded roughly every two years. The most recent recommendations adopted by this body dealt with a question that was very important and sensitive because it related to the subject of international arms transfers in the context of General Assembly resolution 46/36 H of 6 December 1991.

Similarly, the choosing of a certain number of items that could be examined by this body was an important development in the identification of items of particular interest both to States and to the international community at large. Since its 1997 substantive session, the Disarmament Commission has been able to accumulate a considerable amount of documentation on the items submitted for its consideration.

As we have decided, our Commission is to embark on a new process of reform in the year 2000. As we are

concluding work on the three items on our agenda, my delegation believes that the reform process can best rationalize the work of the Commission by limiting it to two items — that is, by having a smaller and more balanced agenda that retains the nuclear question and continues the triennial examination process in order to allow ideas to be better developed.

Thus it is up to us, particularly at a time when the Disarmament Commission is encountering difficulties in making progress on proposals, to act in concert to strengthen the effectiveness of the Disarmament Commission by providing it with the human and material resources it needs and by making available the resources necessary for its functioning.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.